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ABSTRACT

The Regional Skills Program at Big Bend Community College (BBCC) was developed to offer vocational skills training to high school students within BBCC's 5,000 square miles district. The objectives of the program were to identify training needs and priorities, determine the availability of transportation to BBCC, survey college and district facilities, create a standard contract to be used with the school districts involved, evaluate the current program, and establish an implementation plan. Project outcomes included the following: (1) a survey of local high schools regarding their educational priorities revealed a need for training in allied health occupations, agribusiness, greenhouse propagation, business, home economics, and industrial-technical occupations; (2) survey findings, labor market information, and feedback from school personnel underscored the need for a review process for current and future vocational education programs; an updated, competency-based vocational curriculum; and articulation between BBCC's and high schools' vocational programs; (3) the large size of the BBCC district necessitated consideration of such options as satellite programs, mobile classrooms, and itinerant teachers for rural areas; (4) discussions with school district superintendents resulted in agreement on a standardized document allowing BBCC to separately contract with each school district; (5) interviews with administrators, teachers, students, and parents suggested that the Regional Skills Program had increased student interest, improved the retention of at-risk students, added variety to high school programs, and increased 1989-90 enrollments in the BBCC's high school automotive, cosmetology, and welding classes by 53% from the previous year; and (6) a five-year timeline for program implementation was developed. Appendixes include the high school survey instrument, a map of BBCC's service area, and the sample BBCC-high school contract. (WJT)

ED315112

REPORT CONCERNING THE ACTIVITIES

INVOLVED IN

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RURAL REGIONAL SKILL CENTER REPORTED TO THE GRANTOR PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FUND OF THE SEARS-ROEBUCK FOUNDATION

prepared by

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and

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Big Bend Community College

December, 1989

JC 900 092

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INTRODUCTION

Big Bend Community College, in the process of developing plans for a regional skills program for high school students, applied for and received a grant from the Partnership Development Fund to provide some of the resources for its development. The establishment of such a plan was and is enthusiastically supported by the superintendents of several of the fourteen school districts within the college district.

Definite and positive progress was made in the development of a comprehensive plan for the coordinated offering of courses for high school students. However, since the project grant funding was one-third of the amount proposed, some of the activities planned had to be eliminated or attenuated. Even so, the team working on this project felt that the funds provided by the grant significantly increased the propensity for success of the regional skills program as conceptualized in the Big Bend Community College district.

One important consideration of this report is the corrected nomenclature referring to the comprehensive vocational program envisioned. In our grant proposal, we referred to our idea as a Regional Skills Center. In the very first stages of obtaining information from the various state agencies involved, we found that this title has some specific legal ramifications that we did not want to address. For the most part, these included considerations relating to facilities and their funding. In light of this finding, we revised the name of the program to Regional Skills Program (RSP). This newer name will be used for all references in this report.

REVIEW OF THE CHANGES NECESSITATED BY THE REDUCED FUNDING

Objectives -- Originally, six objectives were proposed:

1. identify and quantify vocational needs and priorities,
2. determine the availability of transportation,
3. create a plan of operation for the center,
4. establish a working relationship document,
5. establish (a plan for) the program offerings through 1994,
6. establish the time line for full implementation of the center.

Of these objectives, the first, second, and fifth were accomplished. The third and fourth were pursued on a partial basis. The sixth objective was eliminated.

Work to be done -- Nine elements were included in the proposed methodology:

1. determine the occupational training needs and priorities,
2. evaluate the propensity for changes in student interest and growth in career areas and their impact,
3. determine the available transportation,
4. survey college and district facilities,
5. evaluate the current high school contract vocational classes offered for high school students,
6. design the curricula for anticipated programs,
7. establish a step-by-step plan form implementation,
8. construct an evaluation process, and
9. prepare a report for publication on the outcomes.

Work activities completed included the first, third, fourth, fifth, seventh, and ninth elements listed. The remaining three activities were addressed partially where necessary to fulfill the corollary needs of the activities which were completed.

Anticipated Outcomes -- In agreement with the objectives eliminated or attenuated, the anticipated outcome list was changed to reflect the following items:

1. specification and prioritization of vocational training needs to be accomplished by the Regional Skills Program,
2. determination of the availability of transportation within and among the school districts,
3. create a preliminary plan of operation for the Regional Skills Program in the form of a contract to be used with the school districts involved,
4. evaluation of the current program,
5. a planned sequence and schedule of program offerings through 1994, and
6. documentation of the project.

Of course, this report is the accomplishment of the sixth outcome.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

SPECIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF TRAINING NEEDS

A survey form was developed and sent to each high school with the college district. These *Training Needs and Priorities Surveys* were distributed to the fifteen area high schools in the BBCC district during May, 1989. Ten surveys were returned. (A copy of the survey is attached in Appendix A). The data in the following table represent the high schools within the BBCC district. For reference, the college has about 2,000 students by headcount (1160 FTE's).

District	1988-89 Enrollment	Population
Coulee-Hartline	60	675
Ephrata	487	5359
Grand Coulee	296	1180
Lind	94	567
Moses Lake	1000	10639
Odessa	75	1009
Othello	646	4454
Quincy	395	3525
Ritzville	137	1800
Royal City	161	(est) 1500
Soap Lake	87	1196
Wahluke (Mattawa)	110	(est) 1000
Warden	162	1479
Washtucna	29	266
Wilson Creek	82	222

Each of the responding schools offers Business Education and Home Economics programs. Five have Agriculture programs and at least two other schools would like to offer Agriculture

courses. Four have similar Industrial-Technical programs. One school offers a Health occupations program every other year. As mentioned in the proposal, BBCC offers high school vocational programs in Automotive Technology, Welding Technology, and Cosmetology for three local high schools.

Survey Results (n=10)

Agriculture	Business	Health	Home Econ.	Industrial-Tech.
5	10	1	10	4

Training Needs

The greatest training need reported is in the Allied Health Occupations. This need is strongly supported by labor market information. Other training needs identified were for Agribusiness, Greenhouse Propagation, Business, Home Economics, and Industrial-Technical occupations. Even though not an objective of this survey, several smaller schools also mentioned the need for advanced level academic course such as foreign languages, mathematics, and physics. Several schools noted the need for vocational programming for limited English proficiency and special needs students populations. For example, a Greenhouse Propagation Program for special needs students was mentioned in some responses. Small to moderate size schools identified the need to cooperatively operate programs on a subregional basis, i.e., programs among two or three schools. Suggestions included busing students to one campus, shared instructors, itinerant instructors, and alternative scheduling (evenings and weekends).

Priorities

The results of the training needs and priorities survey, a review of labor market information, feedback from school personnel, and models of successful regional vocational skills programs indicate the following priories:

1. establish a review process for current and new vocational education programs using labor market information, student interest, curriculum currentness and relevancy, instructor readiness, equipment requirements, and available resources;
2. conduct a review of existing programs and courses;
3. examine new programs, e.g., Principles of Technology and Electronics;
4. update curriculum and establish competency-based curriculum for all courses and programs;
5. articulate high school vocational programs with the community college programs at Big Bend Community College; and
6. coordinate program delivery at the regional and subregional levels.

DETERMINATION OF THE AVAILABILITY OF TRANSPORTATION.

The Big Bend Community College district of 5,000 square miles is a sparsely populated agricultural area in the center of Washington state. City populations range from over 10,000 to about 200. Locational relationships of the various towns is shown on the area map in Appendix B. The availability of adequate transportation will be a key element in planning, developing, and implementing a Regional Skills Program for this geographic area.

BBCC Programs

The BBCC campus has been and will be a focal site in the Regional Skills Program. The feasible transportation range to this site seems to be about 35 miles. Seven of the fifteen high schools are within this range: Moses Lake*, Warden, Soap Lake*, Othello, Royal City, Ephrata*, and Quincy. (The three starred schools currently send students to the Regional Skills Program). The 1989-90 enrollments represent a 53% increase over 1988-89 enrollments and this trend is expected to continue. If the other five schools with the 35 mile range begin sending students to BBCC programs, there will be a further dramatic increase in enrollment.

Satellite Programs

Satellite programs at the subregional level were discussed and possibilities were identified. For example, students from Soap Lake and Quincy could participate in Regional Skills Program courses at Ephrata. A Health Occupations course at Ritzville could include students from Lind (and Davenport, a high school from a neighboring community college district).

Mobile Classrooms and Itinerant Instructors

Courses which require substantial investments of equipment, such as Electronics Technology, could be implemented at area high schools using a mobile lab equipment and instructor. The lab equipment and instructor could teach a nine week or semester course at one site and then move to another site. The relative benefits and expenses of this method of instruction need further investigation.

Within a subregional area, it is possible for two or three schools to share an instructor. For example, a Horticulture instructor could be shared by two or three schools by having him/her teach a partial load in each area. This idea was presented in parallel with the Greenhouse program for special students.

CREATE A PRELIMINARY PLAN OF OPERATION IN THE FORM OF A STANDARD CONTRACT TO BE USED WITH THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS INVOLVED

Several discussions were held with the local school district superintendents concerning a formal agreement for the cooperative operation of the Regional Skills program. These exchanges occurred during regular interdistrict superintendent meetings, during small working group meetings, and, more informally, during one-on-one conversations. Most school district management personnel were reluctant to enter into formalized agreements until the implementation had matured further. These people were concerned that they might become committed to an agreement that could have future negative financial complications. However, they did agree to start the process with a standardized document which would allow the college to separately contract with each school district. It was agreed that this approach would provide the most flexibility during the first few years. Since the generic form of this contract is a word processor file, its flexibility is further enhanced by the customizing of various clauses when required by local needs. A copy of an example contract is contained in Appendix C.

EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT PROGRAM

The evaluation of the current vocational skills programs offered through the Regional Skills Program was done by informal interview. Included in these interviews were school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Both positive and negative elements were brought out.

Among the positive aspects were student interest, added variety for high school programs, retention of at-risk students, and increased propensity for enrollment in the same or similar college vocational programs. Included in the negative aspects were the times needed each day for transportation, the expense for safety and course-required personal equipment, and the lack of coordination between the instructors at the college site and those at the high schools. It was a consensus that the positive attributes well outweighed the negative ones. None of the participating high schools have indicated any desire to withdraw.

For the 1989-90 school year, enrollments in the high school Automotive, Cosmetology, and Welding classes at BBCC showed a 53% increase over the previous year. Two additional high schools expressed definite interest in sending students to these classes, but scheduling and transportation problems could not be resolved. The college worked with another more distant high school to develop offer a Health Occupations class at the high school, but student interest was apparently overestimated or waned during the preceding spring and summer during the final part of the planning phase.

The college has proposed a Greenhouse, Nursery, and Landscaping Technology program (with an itinerant instructor) for special needs students to two school districts. Even though initial response seemed positive, neither school district has responded with a request for initiating program development. However, part of this proposal is contained in another application for special needs student programming.

A PLANNED SEQUENCE AND SCHEDULE OF PROGRAM OFFERINGS THROUGH 1994

In its role as a program facilitator-catalyst, Big Bend Community College will continue to offer vocational classes for area high school students. The college plans to increase enrollments in existing Automotive Technology, Cosmetology, and Welding Technology classes and to offer the *Principles of Technology* course in 1990-91. BBCC will assist area high schools in offering new classes at the local and subregional level when feasible. Based on the survey responses, the college plans to add Health Occupations and Greenhouse Propagation for Special Needs Students, and Welding classes in one subregional area. Electronics offerings will continue to be studied for implementation at the district, subregional, and local levels.

Timelines for Implementation

The following timeline is presented as the five year implementation and operational plan:

1990-91

1. Continue delivery of existing classes.
2. Execute formal agreement to form Regional Skills Program.
3. Establish review process for programs/courses.
4. Review existing programs/courses.
5. Examine feasibility of new programs and delivery at subregional and local levels.
6. Implement principles of technology programs.

1991-92

1. Continue program delivery.
2. Begin first curriculum updating cycle (i.e., competency-based format) on a region wide basis.
3. Articulate secondary and post secondary programs.
4. Implement Health Occupations programs.

1992-93

1. Continue program delivery.
2. Continue first curriculum updating cycle.

1993-94

1. Continue program delivery.
2. Complete first curriculum updating cycle.

1994-95

1. Continue program delivery.
2. Conduct major evaluation of program.

Completion of the above tasks is contingent upon continued support and ensuing commitments from area high schools. It is clear that a minimum staff will be needed to coordinate program delivery and accomplish these tasks.

SUMMARY

The Regional Skills Program has generated a great deal of interest among teachers, counselors, and administrators. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction has requested that the Regional Skills Program be considered as a state model. Enrollments in regional high school classes offered at the Big Bend Community College campus increased by 53% in 1989-90. This trend is expected to continue and additional classes are being planned. The responses have been positive, but much more time and energy needs to be invested to continue planning, development, and implementation of the program.

The funding level of the grant ($5,000) was less than the amount requested ($15,000); therefore, it was not possible to accomplish all the activities listed in the proposal. The major outcome of the Regional Skills Program grant was an increased awareness of the benefits of regional skills programs and preliminary planning activities. Regional planning and development activities will continue as a result of this program. Student transportation and its impact on local scheduling will be a major factor in implementing Regional Skills Program offerings. There are several regional and subregional programming options which merit additional investigation.

To further the goal of a Regional Skills Program, BBCC will pursue additional external resources for regional planning, development, and implementation. The college will also work with area high schools to develop a formal document which would form a legal entity to fund and manage the Regional Skills Program. Coordination at the regional level is needed to involve secondary and post secondary instructors, counselors, and administrators in the planning, development, and implementation process. Commitments from local high school boards of education, administration, faculty, and counselors are imperative.

The Regional Skills Program is based on the premise that comprehensive vocational education programs are a vital part of high school students' preparation for employment, life, and life long learning. Successful vocational education programs have the following characteristics:

- Quality programs and Services
- Effectiveness (Doing the right things)
- Efficiency (Doing things right)
- Student Access to Programs and Services

Big Bend Community College (BBCC), in cooperation with fifteen area high schools, will continue to develop and implement the Regional Skills Program.

APPENDIX A

AREA HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY

BIG BEND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Regional Skills Program

Area High School Survey

High School_____ Overall Student Enrollment_____

I. What areas of Vocational Education are currently offered?

Vocational Program	Enrollment
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Vocational Programs dropped in last five years:

Vocational Program	Course
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Have five year projections been developed:

II. Areas where Big Bend Community College could assist with development of programs:

A. Areas of skills training (already identified) where program development should be addressed:

B. Quality program development

C. Improved access to programs

D. Cost effectiveness of programs

E. Modern programming (curriculum updating) - look at future viable career areas

III. Regional Skills Program Coordination:

A. Does travel distance to Big Bend Community College campus present a problem?

1. Campus skills training

2. Mobile units

3. Cooperative outlying skill center

B. Time of class scheduling - minimize time loss in travel for students and/or instructors

1. Half or whole day scheduling

2. Saturday scheduling

3. Other alternatives

IV. Is there a need for supplying information on training possibilities for students in the Big Bend Community College Service Area?

A. Traveling display

B. Formal presentations

C. Expansion of existing career day program

V. Are there areas of concern outside of Voc-Ed where instructional assistance would be helpful?

A. Foreign language (Spanish, Japanese, etc.)

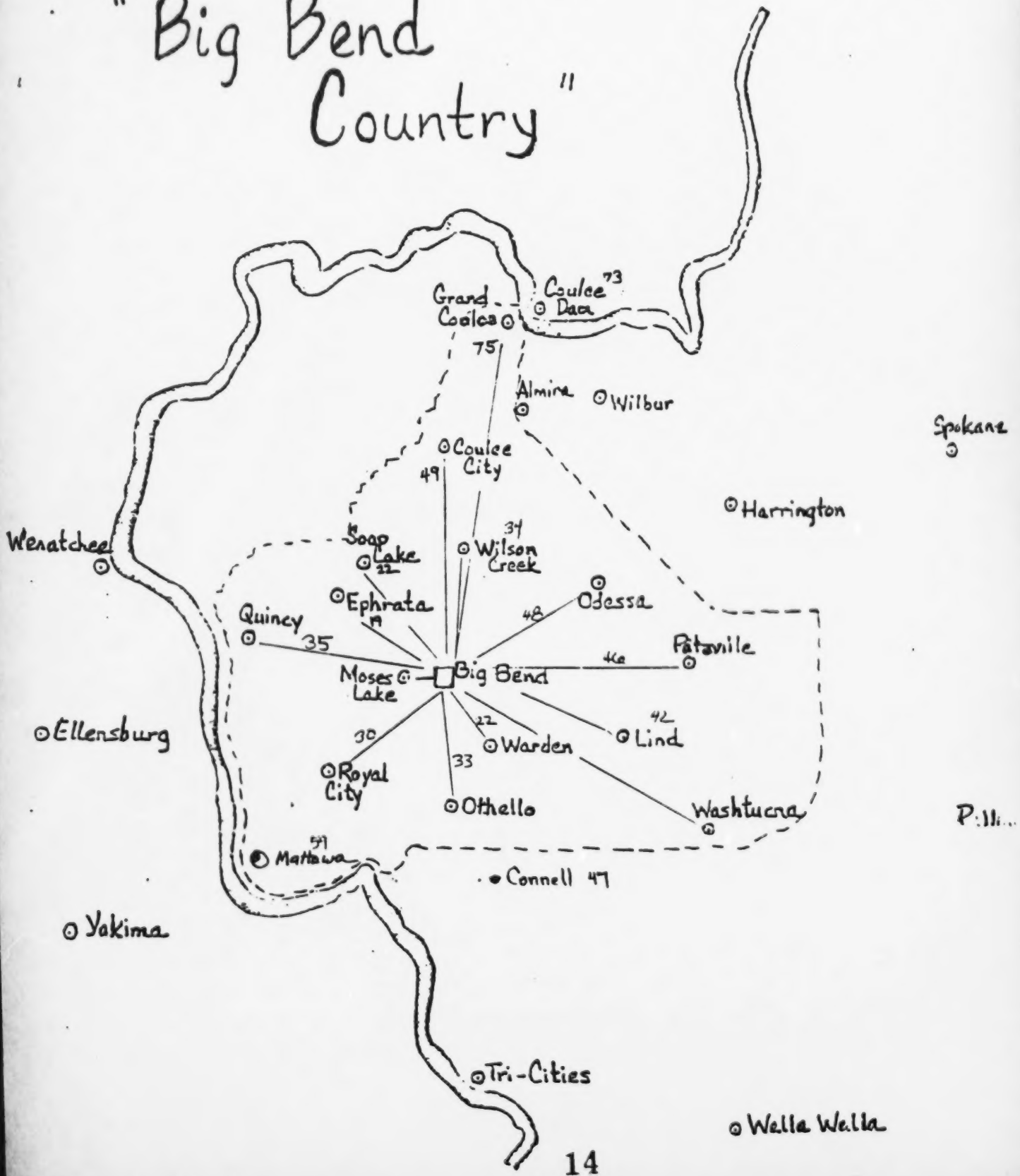
B. Advanced classes (Physics, Science, etc.)

C. Satellite presentations recorded for future use

APPENDIX B

MAP

"Big Bend Country"



APPENDIX C

SAMPLE CONTRACT

REGIONAL SKILLS PROGRAM

STUDENT REIMBURSEMENT CONTRACT

School Year: 1989-90

THIS AGREEMENT made and entered into this _____ day of September, 1989, by and between:

BIG BEND COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO. 18
MOSES LAKE, WASHINGTON 98837-3299

hereinafter referred to as the "College", and

EPHRATA SCHOOL DISTRICT
499 'C'; NORTHWEST
EPHRATA, WASHINGTON 98823

hereinafter referred to as the "School District".

W I T N E S S E T H:

WHEREAS the School District desires that certain students enrolled therein take technical level courses at the College, and

WHEREAS the College has the facilities and desires to make available technical courses to said students enrolled at Ephrata High School, which high school is operated by the Ephrata School District.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual promises of the parties to each other, the parties agree to the following terms and conditions:

I.

The College shall provide instructors, classroom facilities, and training materials for contracted classes for each high school student enrolled.

II.

The College will provide one section of **Auto Mechanics** for the 1989-90 academic year. This section will include a minimum of one-hundred-ten (110) minutes of instruction for the students enrolled. The maximum enrollment in this section will be twenty (20), but not exceed twenty-two (22) students at the beginning of the school term to allow for attrition. The College will also provide a section of Welding for this academic year. This section will also include a minimum of one-hundred-ten (110) minutes of instruction for the students enrolled. At the end of each technical course, the College shall provide the School District, if desired, a written record of the number of hours that each high school student attended classes.

III.

The School District shall notify the College in writing of the number of students expected to enroll in each section and other pertinent information concerning students whom the School District desires to enroll in this program, which tentative notification shall be provided in writing to the College by no later than May 15 of each public school academic year.

IV.

The School District will guarantee the College, for the section listed in Section III above, the pro-rata share of $16,661 for the 1989-90 school year. The welding section is offered for a remuneration of $1100 per student enrolled. In the event that enrollment should materially increase or decrease during the year, both parties agree to examine the costs for savings that might be implemented.

V.

The College will bill the School District on a monthly basis, September through June, on a pro-rata basis for services rendered. Cost reductions and/or adjustments will be made in the last billing. The School District agrees to pay said bill as soon as possible after receipt of said bill, but no later than thirty (30) days thereafter.

VI.

Each party to this agreement shall be responsible for damage to persons or property resulting from negligence on the part of itself, its employees, its agents, and its officers. Neither party assumes any responsibility to the other party for the consequences of any act or omission of any person, firm, or corporation not a party to this agreement.

VII.

The term of this contract shall be from the date of execution until June 30, 1990. It is further agreed that this agreement may be renewed for an additional designated term by a mutual and properly executed document incorporating this agreement by specific reference. If either party does not wish to renew this agreement for an additional year, notice of the same shall be tendered to the other party on or prior to May 1 of the contract year.

IIX.

The agreements contained in this contract may be altered at any time by mutual execution of a written amendment to this contract, which writing shall be considered a formal amendment to this contract at the time the same is signed by authorized representatives of both parties.

IX.

In that the School District must operate its vocational program to OSPI (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction) standards and requirements, and College operates under SBCCE (State Board for Community College Education) constraints, the program will conform to OSPI standards and regulations; i.e., staff certification, leadership, and advisory committee activities.

WITNESS OUR HANDS AND SEALS THIS _____ day of September, 1989

BIG BEND COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO. 18

BY: _____

Gregory Fitch, President

EPHRATA SCHOOL DISTRICT

BY: _____

Richard Kinart, Superintendent

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